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To our Friends and Members:

Well, this is it... the premier issue of the RPGA™ newsletter. We tried to produce a magazine of high quality, containing information YOU want. To keep it that way — COMMUNICATE! Let us know what you think, and what you want.

Frank Mentz

RPGA NEWS

Volume I, Number 1

Summer, 1981

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LETTERS

This issue, there were no letters to the editor. Not surprising; there's sure to be lots next time. Do you have something to say? Write to "NEWSLETTER, POB 509, Lake Geneva, Wi 53147".

So as not to leave you completely disappointed, we've gathered a few incoming comments plus one letter from the DRAGON™ files:

"At last a role player's gaming organization! The time has come for one, and no one is more qualified to carry out a program on such a large scale as TSR." — MF

"I am sincerely thrilled with the idea of the RPGA. Your newsletter sounds 'better than a stack of dragon steaks'!" — SG

"Your offer of an RPGA Membership along with a subscription to DRAGON magazine is too much to pass up." — TJ

"This is a change in the AD&D™ rules that I have made for my own purposes, and one that not many people have thought about. It seems that armour class would be gradually lowered as a character's level builds. I have a 17th level Elven Fighter/Magic-User, and it seems that a character of his power would have gained an advanced AC lower than 2.

"As a character progresses, he gains experience in dodging or fending off blows that is not covered in dexterity adjustments, and experience in moving or weaving through attackers so that blows glance off his armour. I suggest a .5 reduction in AC per level. Therefore, every two levels that character will drop one AC notch." - DB, Montgomery, AL

First of all, the RPGA attitude towards alterations and variants of the AD&D game is: don't. For international tournament stability (see the EGG interview), we must go by the official published rules, monsters and game system as produced by TSR. It's a solid reference, at least. This is NOT to say that there are no holes in the system; there certainly are.

However, there's no harm in discussing changes; as Gary pointed out, if enough of us feel that a change should be made, it will be given "a lot of weight" in the final decisions. This letter presents a reasonable variation, and contains valid points.

If you would like to try something like this, we suggest a .25 (¼) rather than .5 (½) adjustment per level, or less. Don't give any benefits until a full point or more is acquired. And remember that hit points go up each level, and reflect this ability to dodge blows and so forth. The more hit points a character has, the more blows he or she can take and survive; this is roughly equivalent to dodging and weaving so as to take only "glancing" blows.

The obviously variant level of the elf in question merits no discussion, but inspires some questions: Since elves can't be raised from the dead, does this character possess innate invulnerability? And if you can get that high as an elf, why be human? Ah, well, to each his own... we go by the book.

DISPEL CONFUSION

by The Game Wizards

The complexities of any elaborate game system are a challenge to players and game designers alike. Situations often arise in play that are not clearly defined by the rules, and game masters must interpret as best they can. The *AD&D*™ system is no exception; but maybe we can do something about it.

We have consulted the Game Wizards for the answers to a few of the most commonly asked questions about the *AD&D* system. The key individuals in these replies are Lawrence Schick, senior designer at TSR Games and author of the *AD&D Dungeon Module S2: White Plume Mountain*; Dave Cook, TSR Designer and author of *AD&D Dungeon Module A1: Slave Pits of the Undercity*; and Harold Johnson, Supervisor of Design for TSR and co-author of *AD&D Dungeon Module C1: Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan*. These are only examples of the many projects each of them has been involved with; we feel that they are eminently qualified for giving official answers to our questions.

Yes, indeed; these are the Official Answers, and may be used and quoted as extensively as the rules in the hardback *AD&D* books.

Please send all questions about rules for TSR's role playing games to *AD&D* questions (or whichever game you wish), care of this newsletter.

Q: What is the relationship between *INTELLIGENCE TABLE II* (Chance to Know Spells) in the *Players Handbook* and the *ACQUISITION OF MAGIC-USER SPELLS* section in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*? Aren't these contradictory?

A: Not at all — each has a different purpose. Here's how the system works: a new 1st level magic-user receives a Spell Book containing 4 spells (as per the *ACQUISITION* section). As the magic-user adventures, he/she will probably have the opportunity to gain more spells to copy into his/her Spell Book, either from scrolls or other mages' Books. As he/she comes across each heretofore-unseen spell, the magic-user must make a percentage dice roll to see if he/she can ever understand that spell to memorize it (using *INTELLIGENCE TABLE II*). If he/she fails, he's out of luck on that particular spell. The *Maximum Number of Spells/Level* column shows how many spells of each spell level a magic-user can possibly understand with his or her intelligence score. The *Minimum Number* column shows the least number he/she can understand. If, through bad luck, a magic-user rolls below the number needed for comprehension on so many spells that he/she can understand less than the minimum indicated, he/she should reroll for the failed spells until the minimum is achieved for that spell level. Conversely, if more than the maximum are understood, the excess (at the player's choice) must be dropped.

— LJS

Q: What does the armor class and damage for humanoid monsters mean? Is this the armor class of that creature regardless of armor worn (or not)? Is the damage listed done by the creature when it fights without weapons?

A: The armor class listed for humanoids is the typical type of armor worn by that monster. It is possible for that creature to have a better armor class when wearing better types of armor or a worse armor class when wearing types of armor that give less protection. Humanoids without armor will probably have an armor class in the area of 10 to 8; the final decision is left to the DM, and he or she may use whatever is desired. The damage listed for humanoid monsters is the average amount of damage that creature will do if the DM does not want to figure the weapon carried by each creature. The damage listed is **not** done by such creatures when unarmed, unless they are armed with some type of natural weapons (claws, fangs, etc.). This applies to goblins, kobolds, hobgoblins, orcs, bugbears, dwarves, elves, gnolls, gnomes, halflings, and troglodytes.

— DC

Q: Can paladins become Lycanthropes? Are they immune to *all* disease?

A: Paladins are indeed immune to all forms of disease. Unfortunately for them, Lycanthropy is as much a curse as it is a disease. The *DMG* uses an example of a paladin contracting lycanthropy and also mentions *cure disease* and *remove curse* as ways of eliminating it.

— HJ

Q: There seem to be contradictions between what is stated in the *DMG* and the *Players Handbook* concerning the weight of magical armor. Which is correct?

A; Magical armor weighs half normal armor weight, but for game purposes it has no encumbrance. Therefore, when determining the amount of weight which can be carried, the magical armor's weight must be subtracted from the total. However, it is not a factor when determining rate of movement. Magical armored characters will have the base movement speed of an unarmored man, which is then adjusted by the encumbrance of gear and treasure excluding magical armor worn.

— HJ

RPGA INTERVIEW with...

E. GARY GYGAX

E(rnest) Gary Gygax is a graying, slightly portly gentleman with very thick glasses. He has achieved Top Executive status of a multi-million dollar corporation of his own creation while still in his forties, and has put in many 30-hour days during its formation. To appearances, he could be anything - a shoemaker, an insurance underwriter, a businessman.... In fact, he has been each of these things. He has a long and varied history of employment, interwoven with an extensive record of hobby gaming in all its shapes and sizes.

Gary is hard to get a hold on. One minute he'll be the archtypical Senior Executive; the next, a fanatical gamer executing a military coup. He occasionally gets tired of the business routine and dumps everything (unless of critical importance) to preserve his own peace of mind in any of a variety of ways: repeatedly shooting for a wastepaper basket across the room until he's banked it in... debating a very minor point of rules into absurdity or extinction... suddenly affecting a complete change of attitude about someone - only to unexpectedly revert to normal later. In short, Neutral Good with Chaotic tendencies.

Gary is hard to get a hold ***of****, too. Whenever he ventures out of his office in the main headquarters of TSR Hobbies in Lake Geneva, a crowd of employees - some executives, most not - gather in his vicinity and dribble off behind him* en masse, *some hoping to get a quick solution to problems and others just seeking his opinions. He rapidly disappears into his own domain, however, often leaving hopefuls in his wake still laughing over some* bon mot *he has cast off as a smoke screen for his retreat. He still works too hard, steering the now large corporation through the world of modern business.*

Gary relaxes at his home in Wisconsin with his wife, one son, two daughters, and a large assortment of dogs and cats. His eldest son Ernie drops in regularly, as does his eldest daughter Elise (both of whom work for TSR). The Gygax home is not huge but is secluded. Its location is not advertised, as many people have sought his time, advice, and attention since he became well-known as the creator of the Dungeons & Dragons® *game.*

When asked for an article for the first RPGA Newsletter, Gary indicated that he was far too busy - as indeed he is - to produce anything. He did seem willing, however, to be interviewed if time could be found. And so, one murky morning with tape recorder running, we managed to catch Gary in the right mood and with a little time. Thereby came this article; in fact, a whole interview series is planned, to be found in upcoming issues. After editing, trimming, and smoothing the results, we proudly present this profile of E. Gary Gygax, President of TSR Hobbies, Inc.:

EGG: Good morning. What can I do for you, sir?

RPGA: Well, I have a few questions for you, sir, representing the RPGA members and their upcoming newsletter. This is to be an article for our first newsletter, which will also contain articles by most of TSR's best game designers.

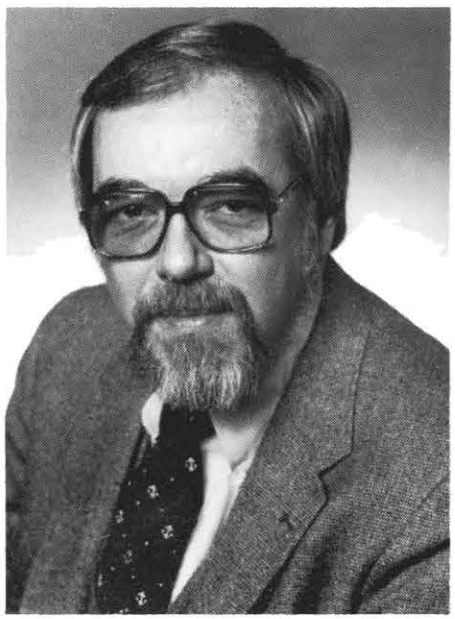
The first question is, almost of necessity, the much misused, much rumored "How did the *D&D*® game get started?"

EGG: How we started selling it, you mean, or...?

RPGA: Well, how was it created? And why?

EGG: The progenitor of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game was simply the fantasy component of the *Chainmail* game published in 1971 by Guidon Games. Those familiar with the rules for that particular thing will notice that heroes have four hit dice, superheroes have eight hit dice, magic-users can toss fireballs; there are various colors of dragons mentioned, orcs, giants, etc. It's all pretty closely tied to what you see later on in the original *D&D* game. Many of the spells, in fact, and so on are all tied to the system that was built into the *Dungeons & Dragons* game. We played miniatures games; the fellows enjoyed the fantasy so much that about 1970 we began to play a *lot* of them.

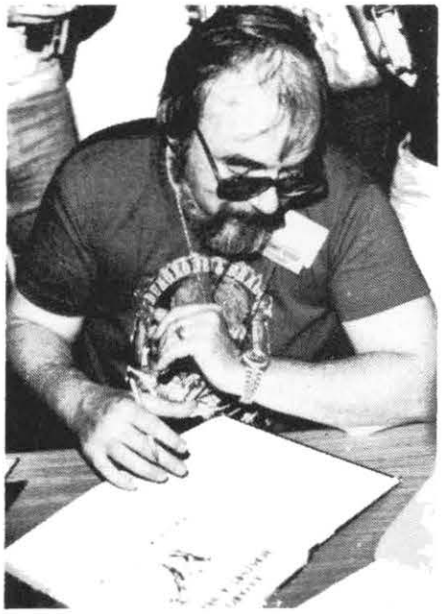
After Guidon published *Chainmail*, and that became one of its most popular sellers - and what with all of the questions pertaining to fantasy - it became apparent that there was a larger element of people interested in fantasy than we had thought. So I began working on what I initialy thought of as a supplement to *Chainmail*, and it eventually grew into its own game.



You may notice that the early *Dungeons & Dragons* game was still kind of neither fish nor fowl, and referred the reader to *Chainmail all* the time. For the first six months after publishing the original *Dungeons & Dragons* game, we thought of the game as going only to those people who played miniatures. That's why the game was put together as it was, making a *lot* of assumptions. It was not what people said - incomprehensible; they were not miniatures players. Any miniatures player could pick it up and know how to handle it, easily.

RPGA: You mentioned, a few times, "we" and "the fellows," and so forth. Who are you really referring to?

EGG: At the time that they - *Chainmail* and then the original *D&D* game - were written, we had an active group of game players called "The Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association" whose membership included Jeff Perren, Lee Tucker, Mike Reese, myself of course, Rob and Terry Kuntz, and Don Kaye. Those were the active people in it. We had a few others. It grew; it grew amazingly by '73. We had perhaps twenty or thirty other people at various times.



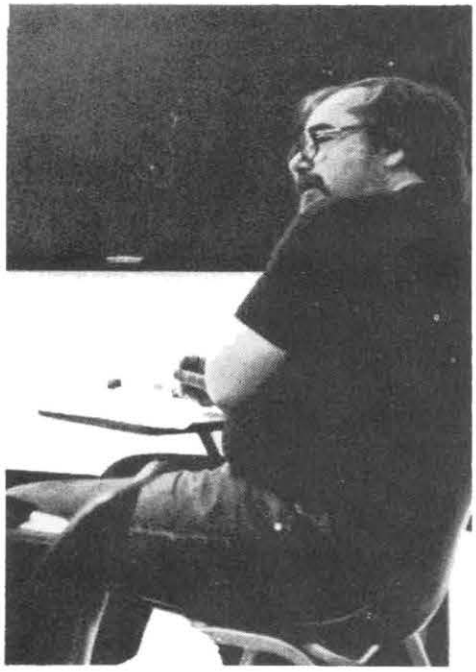
RPGA: When the *D&D* phenomenon first started, of course, there were just a few players. We've been explaining to people how the first set was for hard-core gamers, and then the audience became more widespread. The version written by John Eric Holmes was a little bit easier, and now the latest version is easily understandable by anyone willing just to spend the time to read it. You've made the terms a little blander, and have been getting rid of a lot of the gamese; in general, improving it for the mass market. Do you like what has happened to the *D&D* game? I'm sure you like the widespread publicity and the approval it has received, but do you like the directions it has taken?

EGG: (chuckles) If I understand right: I'm not really too fond of the way *Dungeons & Dragons* games have kind of mutated and changed into very strange exercises. But who can say "nay" to someone who's having a good time with the game? One of the reasons that I was able to throw myself into the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*® project with such vigor, and put in so many hours and turn it out as quickly as I could, is that I felt that a game was needed that would have more control over its audience, and one that was not so open-ended and one that was going to have more uniformity of play, and yet retain the sense of wonder and imagination and creativity that the *Dungeons & Dragons* system, as a game form, had produced. So I have high hopes for *Advanced D&D*™ games in that respect. Unfortunately, it seems as if they're still being perverted, although not as badly.

I believe that the RPGA influence is going to help to *raise* the level of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* play by forcing a little more conformity. I don't *mind* creativity, I don't mind mutation, if it brings out better game play, and superior gaming in general. But from everything that I can see, all the changes that are made are usually foolish and meant to either baby players along or kill them off, one way or another. They're destructive, rather than creative.

Just think about some of the outstanding changes that were made in *Dungeons & Dragons* games, and *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* games too, for that matter, and look at what their effects are. Consider the "double damage on a natural 20", which of course seldom went to the monsters, but only went to the players, therefore making it yet *easier* for the players to kill monsters.

Critical hits? Again, players never took critical hits, only *monsters*, for some reason, would take critical hits. The weapons expertise idea, that a player's chosen weapon... he or she would do a lot better with it. And yet, monsters fighting with their natural abilities, fang and claw - who could be more expert than a tiger with its claws and teeth? -weren't getting any bonuses. The spell point system, which allowed magic-users to become veritable machine guns of spells without ever having to seriously consider what they were going



to take and just shoot everything down, made the magic-user the only character worth playing.

Some of the proposed classes, such as the barbarian I've heard of and the mighty knight, and one or two others that I've heard of, create super-powerful characters who just can... again, it was the only one worth being. Then you just go through and beat up on everything. The changes in the demi-human races create, again, super-powerful characters, so that everybody wants to be a dwarf, or an elf, or whatever it is, and nobody wants to be anything else, because it overbalances in favor. And generally these are done at the whim of a Dungeon Master, or from group pressure, to make a rather uninteresting campaign where everybody is one thing. These are usually the Monty Haul games.

On the other hand, you have the really silly monsters, or sure-death traps for the DM who seems to be rather sadistic and just wants to proceed to kill all of his players regularly, in capricious ways, without giving them any chance whatsoever. That's also guaranteed to spoil a game.

RPGA: So how should somebody - assuming that these major pitfalls are avoided and game balance is attempted, at least - how should someone introduce a new monster, a new magic item, and so forth, to be sure of game balance?

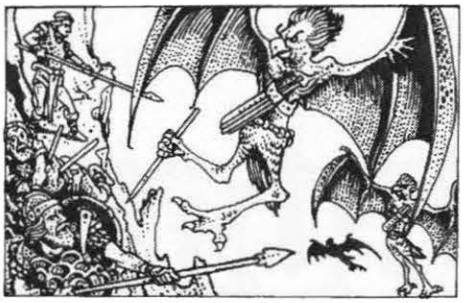
EGG: Compare it to what's there. There *is* a monster rating system; it's fairly easy, and it's given in the *DMG*. Just write up the points for the monster - and be fair - and then look at what it is, compared to the other monsters, and use it. For example, someone was talking about a dragon that changed hues, and as you were fighting it, one moment it would be red, and another it might turn to blue, and then violet... a spectrum dragon, or a rainbow dragon, or a scintillating dragon, something like that. Well, this would be just a horrendous monster, assuming it could use each of those powers (breath weapons) three times; or even if it could only use them once! Particularly if you got into some of those shades... obviously, you can't throw it against anything except super-powerful characters. The problem with characters is that... how many new monsters can you dream up, and how many new challenges can be dreamed up to handle a thirty-second level... ANYTHING? The game is *reasonably* well-balanced, as it stands right now; so that if you add in a new character class, it should be within the general parameters of the other characters, and have some useful purpose.

Obviously, rangers have a useful purpose; they're basically an outdoor character, like a druid is, although both work well in a dungeon. A paladin is specifically aimed at fighting all the bad guys, and the undead. The cleric is there to both fight and heal. A magic-user is there to use some powerful spells to get the group through the tough times; the fighters are there to bear the brunt of all the action. The thieves are to act as, kind of, scouts, and second-story men, and deliver some nifty behind the back blows, and so forth. Illusionists are a type of magic-user, meant really to probably best combat the more stupid monsters, or humans. Bards are an interesting exercise for those people dedicated to a long-term project in an ongoing campaign. Monks are intriguing in that they offer all sorts of promise if you can get them up near the top. But if the DM plays it properly, it's going to be *so* hard to get a monk up to beyond tenth level that it might mean - DESPAIR.

So, and even so, the Grandfather of Assassins - or the Grand Master of Flowers in the monk class - or a 23rd level Bard - or a 20th level magician or wizard -is certainly tough, but it's very hard to get there, and by that time there's probably one or two other characters to contest that individual's supremacy within the game. And of course, anybody who *properly* DMs a campaign long enough to get somebody up to that level has certainly put in enough creative work to have challenges, and so forth, commensurate with the level of players.

RPGA: Skipping over to a wider field of gaming, the Gen Con® convention started "way back when". "Were you there at the conception, and the first ones?

EGG: Well, what happened is that the



year before the Gen Con convention started, I invited a number of fellows up to my place in Lake Geneva for a gaming session, and as I recall, about a dozen showed up. We played Avalon Hill games, and some miniatures, and so forth. I still have pictures! One of the original fellows there who's still in gaming, actively, is Bill Hoyer. A lot of the others have either disappeared or dropped out, at least, from the active ranks, but Bill and I also belonged to a group called the IFW (International Federation of Wargamers), and I was one of its officers, and Bill was eventually president in a couple of years. I suggested to Bill Speer and Scott Duncan, who were president and vice-president - I don't know, maybe I was vice-president and Bill was secretary - but anyway, I said "We ought to have an IFW convention". And they said, "Hey, that sounds like a great idea! You're it!"

So I put the first Gen Con event together, and we held it in Horticultural Hall and had about a total attendance of about fifty or sixty hard-core gamers, who came from all over the country. We had a Canadian or two there; we had some people from out on the west coast, from the east coast, from Texas.... There just weren't too many of us that were aware of each other - then, at least. There were probably more out there, but it was hard to get to them. We did have a lot of walk-throughs, even the first year; the total different people there - I think there was something over 150 at the first Gen Con convention that was run at Horticultural Hall, here in beautiful Lake Geneva.

RPGA: It's sure grown since then. Do you like the way the Gen Con scene has gone? There are mammoth, incredible problems involved these days in handling the thousands of people who show up for the various games.

EGG: It's all right. We had incredible problems handling the *fifty* people that were there the first year, so we just have more people to deal with. I ran the first one all by myself, virtually, with some people to help me set up. It was a one-day show, and I was there the day before and the day after, first setting up and then taking down and cleaning up. From a personal standpoint I don't like the large ones as well, because you can't possibly know all the people there, and a lot of the feeling of comraderie is gone... the closeness, the general tenor of things has changed considerably. On the other hand, it does give a chance for many, many more people to come and see what gaming is all about, get into things, take a look at the new projects that the companies have produced, and meet their friends.

I still see a lot of the old-timers there, and say "hi" to them. It gives a better exposure to the hobby; in that regard it's great. It allows more competitive gaming; you can have 500-man tournaments, 600-man tournaments... that is marvelous. So I think the big convention is a very good thing, and it's here to stay. That's why we also run the three small conventions every year, too. And these are more like the old-time Gen Con events - such as the Spring Revel we just had here - because there you recognize the people, and can sit down and talk with them. It's not a mob scene; things are a little chaotic - some of the games don't come off like they should have, or you go change and play in a different room, or play something different - but it's fun, and everybody has a good time, and that's what the small convention's all about.

RPGA: Doesn't TSR make piles of money off of every Gen Con convention, though?

EGG: Ho ho ho, BOY oh boy, do we LOSE piles of money at every Gen Con convention!

RPGA: Then why?

EGG: As a service to the hobby! We're still basically... this is a company run by people who like games. Most of the people here are gamers. We have some people who don't play games, we have professionals, and we're becoming very professional in the way we do business, and *we're* looking to be professional, too. But first of all it's a service. Secondly, it helps promote the hobby. So it's promotion, I guess, and we're doing it now; if the game players didn't like it and never came, then we would drop it gladly, because it costs us a lot of money to put it on. But we do it now because it's expected of us, and we don't want to let anybody down. It is a good chance for publicity, as far as the news media are concerned, and it's good exposure for new, would-be game hobbyists.

RPGA: The Gen Con event is known as the longest continually running game convention around. Is it the biggest?

EGG: Well, it is absolutely the first of the *gaming* conventions started. There are older conventions, but they were for figure collectors, and things like that. We're the graddaddy of conventions. Sometimes Gen Con has been bigger than Origins, and at other times it hasn't been as big. I don't think *big* is necessarily the measure of how successful a convention is. Really, if people like it and come back, it's successful, if it's got twenty people there or twenty *thousand* people there. We certainly have a lot of events going, and a lot of dealers, and it's a good convention. *(Testily)* I don't think much more can be said on that subject.

RPGA: Feel like a short break?

EGG: Yeah.

Due to lack of space, the short break must become a long one. Watch for the conclusion of this interview next issue, when Gary talks about (among other things) his own favorite games, the D&D movie, and the future of the D&D phenomenon.

THE FASTEST GUNS THAT NEVER LIVED

by Brian Blume, with Allen Hammack, Gary Gygax, and Tim Kask

This article is a revision of reprints from "The Fastest Guns That Never Lived" articles which have appeared in the DRAGON™ magazine. Since many of the first articles (and the most famous stars) appeared in issues of STRATEGIC REVIEW and DRAGON magazines that are out of print, it seems logical to revise them so that new readers and players of the revised BOOT HILL™ wild west game could enjoy them. It must be stressed that these "guns" are far stronger than most player characters, and will unbalance the game unless caution is exercised, but special scenarios using one or two of them might be enjoyable.

Movies and television have given us some of the greatest gunslingers of all time. Their abilities are far superior to those of any gunfighter who really lived, or so it seems from the old shows. Some of those heroes and villains are presented here for the benefit of those who would like to see what they could do. The ratings correspond to terms of the BOOT HILL™ wild west role playing game, published by TSR Hobbies, Inc., and its game rules for gunfights with counters or miniature figures.

The Lone Ranger (Clayton Moore) is probably the premier hero of the western sagas, dating back to the days of radio adventures. Together with **Tonto** (Jay Silverheels), his faithful Indian companion, they were a match for any bad men.

The Rifleman was played by Chuck Connors on TV in the early sixties. Deduct 10 from his chance to hit when he uses any weapon but a rifle.

Matt Dillon, the Marshal of Dodge City on "Gunsmoke", was portrayed by William Conrad on radio and James Arness on television.

Paladin (Richard Boone) was the finest example of the paid gunman. His card read "Have Gun, Will Travel" — which was also the name of the show.

Josh Randall was played by Steve on "Wanted: Dead or Alive". Josh was the perfect bounty hunter; he carries a special handgun which has the effect of a single-action revolver, except that it is "very fast" and has a range that is 2" (or 2 spaces) *longer* in all categories.

Hopalong Cassidy (William Boyd) was one of the early TV heroes of the fifties. "Hoppy" was the two-gunned champion of justice.

Yancy Derringer (Jack Mahoney) and **Pahoo**, his Indian sidekick, were a tough pair. Yancy has a Gambler Rating of 14.

Johnny Yuma was played by Nick Adams on "The Rebel", a TV series of the early sixties.

The Cisco Kid (Duncan Renaldo) and **Pancho** (Lee Carrillo) wisecracked their way across the television screens of the late fifties and early sixties. "The Cisco Kid" is still in syndication in some areas.

Bert, Bart, and **Beau Maverick** were played by James Garner, Jack Kelly, and Roger Moore (respectively) in one of the most popular and well-written television shows ever produced. The "tall, dark strangers" all have Gambler Ratings of 02, and they all prefer talking their way out of trouble to shooting; they will, however, support their friends to the end.

Will (Walter Brennan) and **Jeff Sonnet** were grandfather and grandson, looking for a missing gunslinger, who was Will's son and Jeff's father, on "The Guns of Will Sonnet". Will claimed the prodigal son was the third fastest gun in the West. "He's good, but Jeff's better... and I'm better than both of 'em." No brag, just fact.

Jason McCord was portrayed by Chuck Connors in the TV series "Branded". Every time McCord comes into a town, there is a 75% chance that someone will recognize him who had a close relative killed at Bitter Creek, and will challenge McCord to a gunfight.

Ben, Adam, Hoss, and **Little Joe** were the **Cartwrights** of "Bonanza", played by Lorne Greene, Pernell Roberts, Dan Blocker, and Michael Landon. Little Joe was the only left-handed gun in this powerful ranching family, and also had the quickest temper.

Don "Red" Barry is probably most remembered for his starring role in the series "The Adventures of Red Ryder" from 1940 to 1944. His last starring role was in "Iron Angel" (1969) but he has appeared regularly in supporting roles since then, including such movies as "Johnny Get His Gun" (1971) and "Showdown" (1973).

William "Wild Bill" Elliot rose to fame while starring in the movie serial "The Great Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok" in 1938. In 1944 he took over the lead of the "Red Ryder" series, and ran the "Wild Bill Elliot" series on radio in 1950-51. He continued to make top westerns until the late fifties.

BOOT HILL™

Wild West Game

"Hoot" Gibson was one of the first cowboy stunt men, beginning his rise to stardom in 1921 in "Action". During the 1920s, Gibson ranked second only to Tom Mix as the leading cowboy star. His pictures were mostly nonviolent, but fast and full of action. His popularity declined with the rise of the 'talkies' (in the 1930s), but he kept some attention by starring in the first of the "Three Mesquiteers" series, which would later feature such greats as John Wayne and Bob Steele. He later starred in the "Trail Blazers" series in 1943.

William S. Hart portrayed the Old West as it really was, probably more than any other star of the early westerns. His films, such as "Tumbleweeds" (1925 and 1939) are now classic westerns. When realism in the movies lost its box office appeal, Hart retired from his movie career — and had never made a 'talkie'!

Tim Holt was a real star. Much of the acting, even in the finest of the old westerns, was admittedly not top notch; however, Holt displayed a talent far above most of his contemporaries. In the late thirties and into the forties, Holt was one of the leading box office draws. In 1946 he made "My Darling Clementine" with Henry Fonda, Victor Mature, Walter Brennan, and Ward Bond. This four-star film portrayed the events leading up to the famous Gunfight at the OK Corral. Holt's career ended in the early fifties, but he appeared on TV as late as the sixties in a segment of "The Virginian".

Allan "Rocky" Lane achieved cowboy stardom in the mid forties. He developed a character who was neat, kind, pleasant, handome, but quick on the trigger and tough in a fist fight. He replaced Wild Bill Elliot as the lead in the "Red Ryder" series in 1946. His career, along with most of the other movie cowboys', faded in the early fifties with the rise of television.

Colonel Tim McCoy was most remembered for the series of films in which he

NAME	SPEED	GUN ACCURACY	THROWING ACCURACY	BRAVERY	STRENGTH	EXPERIENCE	SPECIAL ABILITIES
The Lone Ranger	+18	+20	+10	+4/+15	18	+10	A,E,F,G,H,J,L
Tonto	+9	+15	+18	+3/+10	16	+8	L
The Rifleman	+15	+21	+5	+4/+15	18	+10	C,D,E,F
Matt Dillon	+18	+15	+2	+4/+15	20	+10	E,F,G
Paladin	+22	+18	+10	+4/+15	18	+10	A,B,E,H
Josh Randall	+16	+15	+7	+4/+15	16	+10	E,F
Hopalong Cassidy	+15	+20	+5	+4/+15	15	+10	A,E,F,G,H,J,K,L
Yancy Derringer	+16	+18	+7	+3/+10	16	+10	B,E
Pahoo	+12	+10	+21	+3/+10	18	+6	D
Johnny Yuma	+16	+15	+5	+3/+10	15	+10	E,F
The Cisco Kid	+15	+20	+7	+4/+15	15	+10	A,B,E,G,H,J,L
Pancho	+4	+7	0	0/0	16	+6	G,L
Bret Maverick	+12	+10	+2	+3/+10	16	+6	E,G,K
Bart Maverick	+10	+10	+2	+2/+6	16	+6	E
Beau Maverick	+10	+10	+2	+2/+6	16	+6	E
Will Sonnet	+12	+20	+7	+4/+15	14	+10	A,E,H,K
Jeff Sonnet	+12	+15	+10	+3/+10	17	+2	A,E,H
Jason McCord	+12	+15	+10	+4/+15	18	+10	E,G,H,J
Ben Cartwright	+9	+10	+5	+4/+15	15	+10	A
Adam Cartwright	+12	+15	+2	+4/+15	17	+10	A,E
Hoss Cartwright	+9	+7	+2	+4/+15	21	+8	A
Little Joe Cartwright	+15	+7	+2	+4/+15	15	+6	A
Don "Red" Barry	+16	+18	+7	+4/+15	14	+10	A,B,E,H
"Wild Bill" Elliot	+17	+15	+10	+4/+15	17	+10	A,E,F,H,K
"Hoot" Gibson	+12	+15	+10	+4/+15	18	+10	B,G,J
William S. Hart	+14	+15	+7	+4/+15	16	+10	A,E,F,H
Tim Holt	+15	+15	+2	+4/+15	15	+10	A,E,F,H
"Rocky" Lane	+19	+15	+5	+4/+15	19	+10	A,B,E,H
Col. Tim McCoy	+12	+20	+7	+4/+15	16	+10	A,B,E,H
Joel McCrea	+16	+16	+5	+4/+15	16	+10	A,E,F,H
Tom Mix	+18	+15	+15	+4/+15	20	+10	A,B,C,E,G,H,J,K
The Durango Kid	+19	+15	+2	+4/+15	14	+10	A,B,E,H
Bob Steele	+22	+18	+5	+4/+15	14	+10	A,B,F,H
John Wayne	+20	+18	+5	+4/+15	19	+10	A,B,C,E,G,H
Clint Eastwood	+25	+22	+18	+5/+15	17	+10	A,B,E,H
Lee Van Cleef	+22	+21	+5	+5/+15	16	+10	B,E,H
Eli Wallach	+20	+12	+10	+5/+15	16	+10	E,F
THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN:							
Yul Brenner	+19	+17	+15	+5/+15	18	+10	B,E,H
Steve McQueen	+15	+15	+10	+4/+15	17	+10	B,E,H
James Coburn	+21	+10	+22	+5/+15	18	+10	B,E,F,H
Charles Bronson	+15	+15	+7	+5/+15	18	+10	A,B,D,E,H
Robert Vaughn	+12	+15	+7	-2/-3 or +5/+15	17	+10	E,F,H,K
Horst Buchholz	+12	+15	+5	+4/+15	17	+10	A,E,H,K
Juan Mateos	+10	+10	+7	+4/+15	16	-5	B,H

played "Lightning Bill" Carson. McCoy developed a character who was "The Detective of the Range"; Carson frequently donned disguises during the course of a movie. He starred from the late twenties through the early forties, at which time he joined the army and attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Joel McCrea rose to stardom in the mid thirties on the strength of some fine non-westerns. His popularity was slipping until, in 1944, he made "Buffalo Bill". After 1945, McCrea made mostly westerns, including the title role in "The Virginian". He portrayed various historical figures, including Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and Sam Houston. In the late forties and early fifties, he did the radio serial "Tales of the Texas Rangers", and starred in television's "Wichita Town" in 1959. He starred in "Mustang Country" in 1975, and is still active. McCrea is currently the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

Tom Mix was a U.S. Marshal and a Texas Ranger before becoming a movie actor! By 1921 he was the "King of the Cowboys" in the movie westerns. His films had lots of action, chases, and fight scenes, but usually no one was killed. He never smoked nor drank on-screen. Mix did all of his own stunt work, and suffered over 80 injuries during his film career. He retired from the movies in 1935, and died in a car accident in 1940.

The Durango Kid (Charles Starrett) rode across the screen in 56 movies, starting in 1940. "The Return of the Durango Kid" appeared in 1945 and continued until 1952. The Kid would typically appear from nowhere, save the day, and reappear later as a mild-mannered 'nobody'.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

A — ½ penalty when shooting from horseback
B — Never surprised
C — Double the length of medium range when shooting
D — Shoulder arms are considered as "fast"
E — May "hipshoot" without penalty
F — No penalty for giving opponent first move
G — Treat wounds as one type lower when shot. A "Mortal Wound" result becomes a "Serious Wound", etc.
H — ½ penalty when shooting at a moving target
J — Must use Sharpshooting rule, and must fire gun at "gun arm/hand" only
K — No penalty for "wrong hand" shooting
L — Weapon never runs out of ammunition

Bob Steele was probably the fastest draw of all the old movie cowboys. He rose to fame in the late twenties. In the forties he did a series as Billy the Kid, and made 20 pictures in the "Three Mesquiteers" series; he also starred in the "Trail Blazers" series. He has continued working to the present day; you may remember him as Trooper Duffy on television's "F Troop".

John Wayne has appeared in a great number of westerns. These ratings represent a composite of his various roles.

Clint Eastwood did appear in television westerns, but his career didn't merit the 'star' category until he became the "Man with No Name" in the "Dollars" series of movies. Eastwood has a Gambler Rating of 12, and is definitely one of the finest gunfighters ever seen.

Lee Van Cleef is one of the few 'bad guys' to make it big in western movies. He played 'heavies' throughout, from films and television of the early fifties through his most successful role — one of the three gunfighters in "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly" (which starred Clint Eastwood). This film launched his starring career in European westerns.

Eli Wallach has also achieved some notoriety as a villain, especially in "The Magnificent Seven" and in "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly". He was a scrappy, trouble-making gunfighter.

Yul Brynner has made several westerns, and the ratings are a composite of them all, most notably "The Magnificent Seven", "Catlow", and "Westworld".

Steve McQueen played Brynner's friend in "The Magnificent Seven", where he was a superb rifleman.

James Coburn is always as cool as ice in his best westerns. In "The Magnificent Seven" (on which these ratings are based), his favorite weapon was a stiletto throwing knife, with which he had deadly accuracy and speed.

Charles Bronson has been excellent in many movies, including "The Magnificent Seven". His fearlessness and strength have won him a reputation of being a very tough hombre in a fight.

Robert Vaughn was also in "The Magnificent Seven". He portrayed a cowardly con man who overcame his cowardice at the end, where he died bravely. Note: before play begins, roll percentile dice; a result of 75 or less indicates that the lower Bravery Score should be used.

Horst Buchholz played the last of the professional gunfighters in "The Magnificent Seven". He was greedy and careful about the odds in a fight, but dependable and steadfast when in action.

Juan Mateos played Chico in "The Magnificent Seven". Brynner and McQueen were uncertain about taking this brash, untried youth along, but finally gave in because he would make their number seven — 'for luck'. He survived in that film, and later reappeared in "The Return of the Seven".

Notes For the Dungeon Master

Miscellaneous Notes

Ever since the original D&D® set was published, fantasy role players have been searching for unique, unusual, and startling tricks and traps. The "ogre jelly" of that fabled edition, plus other infamous tricks (and puns) gave rise to the never-ending search for the truly different, epidemic among Dungeon Masters. This column will provide an outlet for unpublished and unsung creative minds across the world, united through the RPGA™ network.

Send us your goodies! If you have a *really good*, relatively unknown trick or trap that you don't mind telling the world about, we'll take a serious look at it and maybe publish it here, giving you credit. The deadline for the next issue is July 27, 1981.

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1. The cleric stands by the coffin, holy symbol at ready. The party has a sturdy fighter holding a rope attached to the coffin lid, and pulls it off on the prearranged signal. The cleric thrusts the symbol forward at whatever is in the coffin... and sees the medusa, who tries to petrify him and then bites him with the snakes. (If you feel particularly nasty, follow this up with some unar-dead — like wraiths — after working over the poor cleric.)
2. The treasure seems unguarded, but the sly mage has determined otherwise; the area around it is magical. A dispel magic might destroy any potions therein, so a pet is sent to the area; BANG goes the glyph, leaving the treasure free for the taking. Unfortunately, when picked up, the treasure's second trap, a trip wire, rings a Chime of Hunger and wakes a few monsters nearby.
3. A bridge leads north across the underground chasm to a 60′ long ledge, at each end of which is a door, continuing north. The ledge forms a "T" with the bridge. As the party progresses onto the ledge, it is found to be on a pivot; the whole party cannot progress through the door(s) until they split up evenly, half entering each door, keeping the ledge balanced. They will reunite eventually, but until then....
4. The party meets a set of guards, who demand to see their papers. If they have none, they are directed to the nearest office, which will keep them waiting for hours unless bribed; the papers (not including the bribe) cost 100gp per person, or 1000gp, or whatever fits the campaign. When asked for their papers at the next meeting with the guards, the party proudly gives them — only to have them eaten by the guards. They must return and buy more....
5. The NPC acquired by the party before leaving for the adventure has a severe problem. In times of stress, he/she gets a bad case of very loud hiccups. Especially when trying to sneak up on something, or when casting a critically needed spell. (Well, I guess a *cure disease* would calm him down for a while.)
6. The area of twisting corridors the party is entering is the home turf of a Cleric/Assassin, levels 4/7 or so. He likes to run around with Dust of Disappearance on (applied after sighting the party through his peepholes) and with a silence 15′ radius donned for the attack. The party members start dropping like flies, from the rear forward, unless they take a few precautions. (Foreshadow the danger with bodies or blood, or this one can be a real killer.)
7. The druid encountered with her own party is relatively harmless; the party is only about level 3-5. But the druid is wearing a Girdle of Giant Strength, and can do much damage with ranged weaponry — like darts (3 attacks per round, damage d3/d2 *plus strength* bonus....)
8. The four halflings encountered in the woods give some help to the party, and are quite friendly and courteous. They are thieves but not armored, and have all been charmed successfully by an erinyes, who is polymorphed into the shape of one of them. (The party starts getting worried when they must save vs. spells (including wisdom adjust) against charms, but nobody's doing any spell casting... 'must be something out there in the woods' says a halfling.)
9. The skeletons encountered are mostly turned by the cleric, and the others are quickly dispatched by fighters. But they have been enchanted to regenerate, and keep getting up! The noise attracts something nasty living nearby....
10. While heading down the corridor, a section of wall ahead disintegrates. Noises of battle are heard, and a demon is seen fighting with a group of elves, who are losing badly. The party decides to vacate the premises rather quickly... and are thus scared away by an illusion.
11. The mummies (or black pudding, or other creatures susceptible to fire) are infested by brown mold, which grows rapidly when the fire is used... Watch it. This one can be deadly, too.

THE FIGHT IN THE SKIES™ Game

by Mike Carr

The FIGHT IN THE SKIES game is a multi-player game which simulates World War I aerial combat in the last two years of the war, 1917 and 1918. Each player takes the role of an individual pilot, flying one of the many famous aircraft of the era - classic planes such as the Sopwith Camel, S. E. 5a, SPAD, Fokker, and Albatros. Players are part of a team situation, and each one makes all the tactical decisions of maneuvering and fighting, with the aircraft reflecting their historical real-life characteristics of speed, maneuverability, climbing and diving ability, and so forth.

The game system itself is relatively simple, taking up only the first 8 pages of the 32-page gamebook. This means that the basic mechanics of play are fairly easily grasped by beginners. The serious enthusiasts, however, also enjoy the game, for there are a multitude of realistic optional rules which add to the game's complexity to create the "feel" of WW I aerial warfare. These optional rules include such aspects as: Clouds, Wind, Observation Balloons, Landing & Take offs, Range/Firepower Effectiveness, Ammunition Expenditure, Gun Jam ming, Ground Fire & Ground Attack, German Parachutes, and Pilot Experience. It is the latter rule which gives the game its very popular role playing aspect, as players form their own rosters of new pilots, taking each one into combat —seeking first to survive, and then to accumulate successful missions and the "kills" of enemy planes downed in combat.

The role playing thrust is built around the concept of each individual pilot and his quest to become an "Ace." Each player creates and maintains a roster of individual pilots, each with a unique identity. All of them start as fledgling flyers, and enter the world of aerial combat at a disadvantage — seeking survival first, and then the experience (and hopefully, the kills) that will allow them to meet their adversaries on an equal footing. As they progress through more and more missions (air battles), they gain the experience and quite possibly the aerial victories to move them to higher levels of experience - with a commensurate increase in game abilities at each step. Of course, the career of a combat pilot is fraught with danger, and many are lost in the course of combat, falling due to an enemy's bullets, an unlucky hit, or hostile ground fire - to become another casualty of the Great War, or perhaps a prisoner of war. In any event, the challenge of taking a pilot through the risks and dangers of combat is what makes a FIGHT IN THE SKIES game exciting. Just as in other role playing games, players easily identify with their various characters, and feel their loss just as keenly if misfortune befalls them.

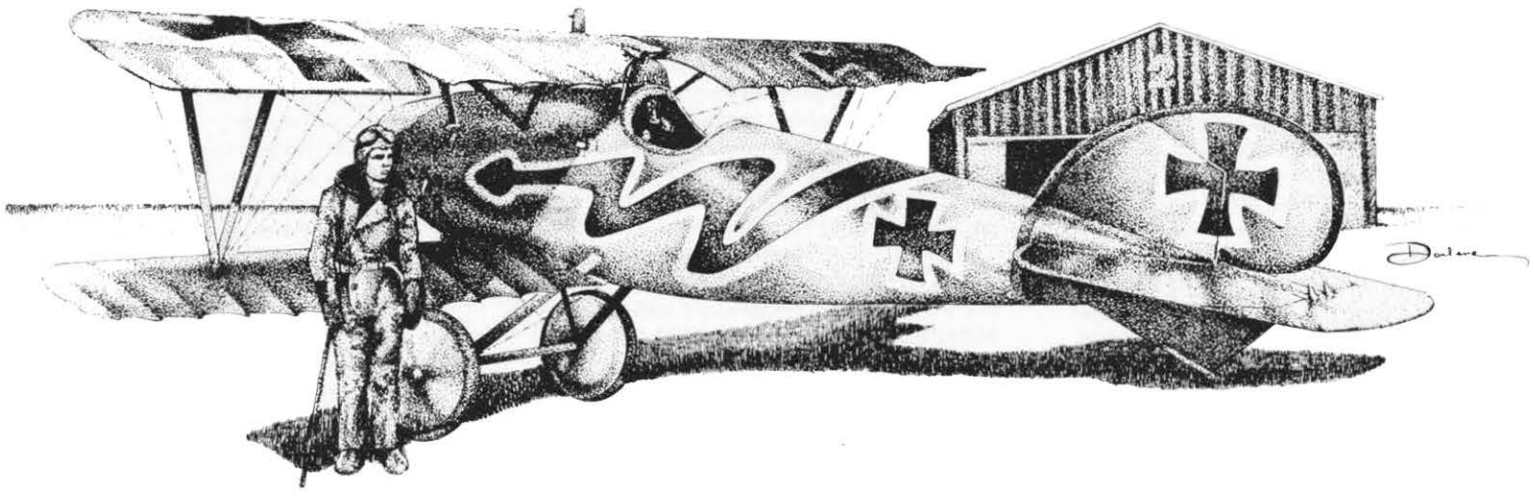
The comraderie of "FITS" players rivals their World War I counterparts — and the elements of honor and chivalry which were a part of the war in the air are also sometimes seen in the game. Whether it's swapping stories about pilot experiences, comparing the careers of individual pilots, or going to the aid of a distressed wingman in a hard-fought game, FIGHT IN THE SKIES players are a group of enthusiasts who share a common bond — a love of the game, the era, and the pilot characters who come alive under their own guidance. They all know the same feelings that make this more than just another game — the trepidation the novice pilot feels when meeting an experienced adversary, the feeling of danger when an Ace pilot is imperiled, the comradeship of flying with familiar wingmen, the satisfaction of surviving a difficult mission, and — of course — the thrill of bringing down a dangerous enemy.

The FIGHT IN THE SKIES set is many games in one package and for any number of players from 2 to 12. Besides suggestions for setting up games, there are fifteen different scenarios for up to 8 players. Also included are unique provisions for random combat which take into account a myriad of variable factors involved in setting up a dogfight. They are found simply by rolling dice and include: number of planes, altitude level of the air battle, starting altitudes of opposing flights, location of the combat (over a particular side of the lines, or perhaps "No Man's Land), opposing aircraft types, clouds, wind, and so on. Since any number can play (a further variable), the result is an infinite number of possible game situations! Because of its variety and flexibility with any number of participants, FITS has an appeal that makes it far more than an everyday game. And the fact that the average playing time is only 45-90 minutes per game means that several different games can be played in one sitting, regardless of the number of players.

Most of all, FIGHT IN THE SKIES games can be fun and exciting! Each player is a personal part of a challenging team situation where flying skill, shooting ability, quick decisions, and finesse (plus a little bit of luck) can combine to make the difference between success and failure. The thrill of scoring a decisive "kill" or the challenge of "riding down" a burning plane are only two of the possible experiences which are a common part of FIGHT IN THE SKIES games. Everyone who plays it comes away with real respect for the pilots of World War I — a tribute to the game's accuracy and fulfillment of purpose.

The FIGHT IN THE SKIES game is the result of over 13 years of exhaustive research and playtesting, and the current 6th Edition includes everything needed to create all kinds of World War I dogfights:

— a large size playing grid, printed on



heavy paper stock;
— a complete instruction and rules booklet over 30 pages in length which includes basic rules plus a host of realistic optional rules, and more;
— over 100 die-cut playing pieces covering all of the major aircraft types available on all sides during 1917 and 1918, 26 Allied and 30 German/Austro-Hungarian types in all — plus balloons!
— a full listing of specification data, detailing the relative performance characteristics of all the aircraft types included in the game. And historical charts to show which were in service in any particular month, and the chances of seeing each in combat;
—four sets of maneuver cards covering the aerobatic possibilities of the era, like the loop, barrel roll, wingover, falling leaf, and others;
— a full set of important charts and playing aids;
— and a set of dice for probability resolution;
— all in an attractive, full-color gamebox.

The FIGHT IN THE SKIES Society is a testimony to the game's popularity, encompassing approximately 85 members with a tradition going back to its founding in 1969. The society's purpose is to promote the play of FIGHT IN THE SKIES through games by mail and tournaments held at regional gaming conventions (including the society's annual games at the GEN CON® convention each August — an event that itself dates back to 1968). The society currently has approximately 15 games being conducted by mail, and the society's bimonthly newsletter, AERODROME, has published over 80 issues — and is still going strong. The FIGHT IN THE SKIES Society's history and the loyalty of its players reflect the unusual appeal this game has for its players. This illustrious group will place itself alongside the RPGA™ efforts to promote the game by increasing its popularity and providing the opportunity to play and compete in events nationwide.

The FIGHT IN THE SKIES concept had its beginnings in 1967, when the movie "The Blue Max" inspired creation of a game on WW I aerial combat. Three photocopied editions of 25, 50, and 100 copies (respectively) gave gamers their first taste of it, and they wanted more. The 4th Edition was published in 1971 by Guidon Games, and after the demise of that company TSR Hobbies published the 5th Edition in 1976, with the current game being the 6th Edition. All throughout its history, the FIGHT IN THE SKIES game has evolved into a more realistic and widely played game.

One of the game's most interesting traditions is the fact that it has been a part of every annual GEN CON® gaming convention each August. The FIGHT IN THE SKIES Society's annual "Dawn Patrol" is played each year at 7:30 AM on the Saturday of the convention. This year is no exception, as 30 players will take to the skies on the morning of August 15th for this traditional event, held at the UW-Parkside campus outside Racine, Wisconsin. This classic event is only one of the seven FIGHT IN THE SKIES games scheduled as part of the 1981 GEN CON® convention and is the longest-running annual event on the convention schedule. An RPGA™ event will also offer FIGHT IN THE SKIES players an opportunity to compete in a sanctioned game, with prizes and scoring in the RPGA™ tradition. It's only the start!

What does the future hold for the RPGA™ FIGHT IN THE SKIES players? Well, first off — increased exposure of the game and the opportunity to meet many new players. Add to that the series of tournaments the RPGA™ sponsorship will make possible at national gaming conventions, the articles and coverage available in the RPGA™ newsletter, plus the chance to place your own pilots on a national listing of Aces, and you can see that there's plenty of exciting things in store! I'm looking forward to supporting the Association in any way I can — and to meeting *you* in the skies over the Western Front at an RPGA™ event. In the meantime, if you haven't played the game, I hope you'll give it a try. Until then, KEEP 'EM FLYING!

March 11, 1981

An Open Letter to

Frank Mentzer
RPGA™ Coordinator
POB 509
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Frank,

Best of luck to you and the RPGA™ team in the near future! The Association sounds like a great idea and I hope it will be successful in promoting mature competition and fun.

I don't know if you know what has happened to TOP SECRET™ game in the past five years, so I'll tell you (this gives me a good chance to plug my product and exercise my back-patting muscles). After being inspired by a Halloween version of an obscure role playing game at ISU (*Iowa State University*) in 1975, I started to write. Leading a pack mule underground with a bunch of greedy, blood-thirsty humanoids just didn't excite me too much at four in the morning. I wanted something I could relate to. Shadowing coeds on campus, opening mailboxes, and searching laboratories by flashlight are far more productive. Besides, I'd had a childhood of Maxwell Smart, "Mission: Impossible," and "I Spy."

April Dancer, James Bond, Emma Peel and Ilya Kuriyakin were far more believable to me than Conan or Bilbo or Fafhrd or Elric. So, from a video background and a childhood of mimicry and making people believe I was someone else, the TOP SECRET™ game evolved. Mike Carr was immediately encouraging. Allen Hammack would later carve over 200 typewritten pages into an editing masterpiece of 64 printed pages. A module was needed, so I practically stole Mike Carr's instructions for D&D® Module B1 (take a look at it sometime, and substitute "Admin" for "Dungeon Master", or "Human Target" for "Monster"). After a year of gametesting and eighteen months of editing, the TOP SECRET game was published in February of 1980. Orders from the Hobby Industry of America show in Anaheim and the Toy Show in New York helped the first printing (10,000 copies) to evaporate. The second printing ran out in three months. The DRAGON™ magazine started carrying "The Rasmussen Files" and printed a mini-module by Mike Carr called "The Missile Mission". In late 1980 (or was it early 1981?), Games Workshop of London chose the TOP SECRET game as the Best New Game of 1980. (I hope the players in the USA follow this example of good taste at Origins '81.)

What next? Watch DRAGON magazine for more "Rasmussen files" and mini-modules. TSR Hobbies wants me to write a new beginner's module to replace Sprechenhaltestelle. TSR is also looking for more advanced mission modules like OPERATION: RAPIDSTRIKE from good imaginative writers. THE SPACE GAMER would like me to write an article on how to combine the TOP SECRET game with TRAVELLER. Even Dave Cook's CRIMEFIGHTERS rules, from DRAGON magazine #47, had a lot of "transferrable" information and tasted like a new spin-off to me. Well done, Dave! Such fresh role playing concepts are needed.

I'll be trying to appear at regional cons this spring and summer. Gen Con® XIV game convention is my major target this year, unless those royalty checks get heavier soon. I should be able to attend any RPGA™ Meetings, TS Seminars, and Tournaments there.

A few ramblings before I stop transmitting:

Why don't more RPG authors have more than one system on the market? Are they too busy to develop another, or just uninspired? I would guess that even the best idea must be marketable, or it won't see print. Module writing is a temptation, too.

GEN CON® SOUTH REPORT

Jacksonville Beach, Florida: On a mild weekend here in early February, over 350 hobby gamers descended on the Ramada Inn to play *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®* games, war games, board games, and many others.

A highlight of the events here at the fifth annual GEN CON® South game convention, held on the weekend of February 6-8 1981, was a large battle of miniature tanks on "The World's Largest Sand Table"—the beach of the Atlantic Ocean! Players maneuvered their forces in a large outdoor game of *TRACTICS* (published by TSR Hobbies).

The convention was run by the Cowford Dragoons, a local game club, and co-sponsored by TSR Hobbies, Inc. TSR presented over $300 in prizes to the winners of the *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®* Open Tournament, which drew over 200 players of all ages. Many playing aids for *AD&D™* games were given away as prizes along with donations from other companies, including lead miniature figures from Grenadier Models and Minifigs, paint brushes from Polly-S, and thirteen RPGA™ Memberships.

Winner Matt Rupp receives his prizes.

The top winner of the tournament was **Matthew Rupp** of Auburn Fantasy Gamers, a club based in Alabama. The other winners included:

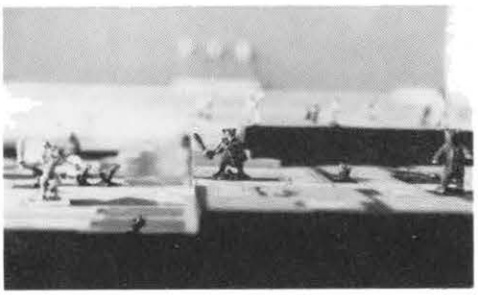
WINNING TEAM

Steven Berger	Forest Park, GA
Martin Chytil	Independent
Michael Etheridge	Forest Park, GA
Eric Forsman	Independent
Bruce Pettibone	Independent
Dwayne Smoot	Independent

RUNNERS UP

Kim Humphreys	St. Lucie County Wargamers
Carl Lum	SCS (Sun Coast Strategists)
David Mazzoli	PSD (Psychadelic Ducks)
Mike Stonebraker	PSD
Mike Thompson	SCS
Roger W. Werder	SCS

A unique aspect of this convention was the extensive club participation. At most game conventions, individuals compete for points and prizes. Here in Florida, however, clubs attended and played as groups, closely watching the computer-assisted tallies of club points in each category (role playing games, war games, board games, and others). The rivalry was fierce, and cheers and groans were often heard as the "best overall club" totals changed at the completion of events. The clubs represented in the tournament included:



Angrenost
Arioch's Chosen
Auburn Fantasy Gamers
Berkely Games
Courts of Chaos
Cowford Dragoons
Crobie Droogs
Dragons Den
Fantasy Unlimited
Forest Park
Gold Coast Lancers
High Lords of Fantasy
Indialantic Toy Shoppe
Jacksonville Brotherhood of Thieves
Leviathan
MAGIC
NWF (Naples Wargame Federation)
Orange Park Wargamers
PP&P (Push, Pull, & Pivot)
Round Table Association
St. Lucie County Wargamers
Florida Sun Coast Strategists
Tampa Optics
U of Florida Simulated Combat Club
U of Miami ROTC
U of Central Florida, Orlando
U of South Carolina
Wardens of the Gem
Wasted Knights

The GEN CON® South convention VI will be held next year in February. For more information, write to: GEN CON® South Convention VI, POB 16371, Jacksonville, Florida 32207.

Is anyone else tired of seeing magic and swordplay role playing games, in a fantasy medieval setting? What about some more fresh directions with mass-market appeal, but more role playing themes and settings to choose from? What about the modern era, and less-than-mortal combat in interactions? What about professions?

Where are the females? I'd like to see more writers and artists of the female gender. What keeps them away from role playing? What do they want in gaming? Has anyone done a survey on likes and dislikes?

Since the TOP SECRET game has sold over 30,000 copies in its first ten months, you can bet that TSR is interested in more of the same. I have talked to Mike Carr about this, and have a few RPG ideas still stacked away in my files. Of course, any further details would ruin the surprise and as usual, such information is classified TOP SECRET!

Surreptitiously,

Merle M. Rasmussen
"The Administrator"

GAMMA WORLD™

SCIENCE FANTASY - A ROLE PLAYING GAME WITH A DIFFERENCE

by JAMES A. WARD

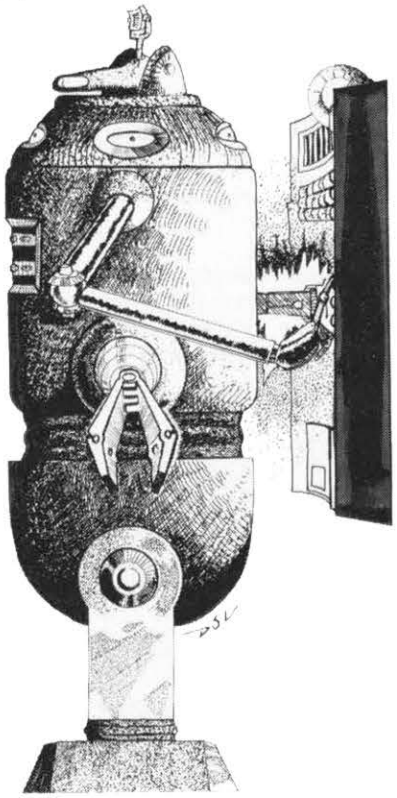
The creation of the Gamma World concept was a very real attempt to combine the already popular ideas of fantasy role playing with all of the interesting aspects of science fiction. When I was introduced to the D&D® system in the seventies (and it is hard to believe that it was only 7 years ago) I continually found myself wishing to have items and inventions that could never have existed in the medieval settings that I constantly found myself gaming in. Every once and awhile I would be given a taste of such things in a non D&D way. I think it was in Gary G's game, when I was able to acquire a 4d6 ray gun, that I realized that such things were possible — if rules would allow for their balance in a game format. I created Metamorphosis Alpha in response, and the Gamma World game later evolved with the help of Jake Jaquet.

In working with the Gamma World system, there are many features that are similar to the D&D and AD&D™ systems. One can immediately notice the armor class, or the dice of damage that weapons do, as coming straight out of fantasy role playing games. The body's inherent powers (strength, intelligence and the like) are familiar to both games. These and other TSR™ role playing concepts had proven themselves, and they were used in the Gamma World system. The difference comes in the subject matter and its treatment.

The scenario upon which the Gamma World game is based is a simple one: the whole earth has undergone a conflict which spread destruction and radiation over everything. Amid this destruction, man and new intelligences are struggling for dominance in their respective areas. The rules booklet briefly outlines a group of technological items left by the "Ancients", which prospective players can learn how to use, helping them to rise above their environment. The rules also present groups of physical, mental and plant-like mutational powers that make the beings of this new earth strong enough to survive the grim setting in which they grow up. Mental powers (like telepathy and empathy) allow for communication between specie that have no verbal languages. Physical powers (like electrical generation or sonic blasts) makes for interesting combat against items like attack robots and powered suits of armor.

The game has existed for over a year now, and is one of TSR's success stories for several reasons special to itself. Many Dungeon Masters have picked up the system so they can liven up their campaigns with some of the monsters and some of the items of technology. These were designed to balance each other, and I have seen them work in several different types of role playing games. The concept of a *complete* being at the beginning of the game — not increasing in powers — has appealed to wargame spirit of many players; they look at Gamma World characters as a real challenge in survival. In the Gamma World system, one gains power through material acquisition and picking up knowledge of the working environment. There are greater possibilities for variety in the system; while D&D players are encouraged to create their own monsters and items, the existing ones are easier to use and work with. The Gamma World referee is forced to work a little harder because of the practical need to create continually mutating beings and situations. In a GW environment, the influence of radiation and mutations is so strong that it creates an ever-changing series of scenarios, resulting in fast-paced games with a highly lethal flavor — more than in most D&D campaigns.

Finally, the societies that exist in the game have created an ever-changing game flow that is unique to the GW system. In Gamma World, as in real life, there are power groups that work for dominance, not only in their habitats but in areas far removed from their local situation. When groups like the Knights of Genetic Purity (who follow a doctrine in which pure-strain humans are considered the only intelligent race fit for life on the face of the earth) and the Radioactivists (a group worshipping the destructiveness of radiation and its mutational effects) come together, it makes for unusual action that works behind the scene of the normal player interaction. Because of these groups, the normal actions of the players from day to day become changed. We no longer see players allowed to enter areas to look for treasures (sometimes finding it among the ruins) and safely coming back home. They must meet and face pressure from groups that will often resent the way the group looks, the individual members of the group, or what they are carrying. These power blocs allow the referee to have even more interplay within the role playing system (for more fun at the same time).



I think what appeals to me most in the game is the ability to use the present and its environment for encounters that the players come across. When I have them run into a restaurant or office building, I just think of examples that I have been in and it becomes easy to judge the situation. A case in point was a bit of action where the players ran across a small armory that was left untouched by the influence of the "Ancient" wars. I had been very familiar with armories that my father worked in while I was a boy, and the one my players ran into became the one to which I had gone to see my father. I knew where the supply rooms were and the offices and the like, and I was able to tell them what was there, even though I hadn't written any of that down. This sort of "use of the present" makes judging the game much easier. There is a small drawback, however, in that players are trying to use their "real life" knowledge in the game format. It is important to game balance to not let people use firearms or the like just because they have seen them used by others, or because the present day use of such things is easy for us. The driving of a car is an easy process for most of us, but when all of the factors and variables are given to a person not directly familiar with this modern day culture, the task would become all but impossible. The same concept must be used in the Gamma World setting. Beings cannot be allowed to directly use technology unless they have spent the time and effort to learn all of the important processes of the items under question.

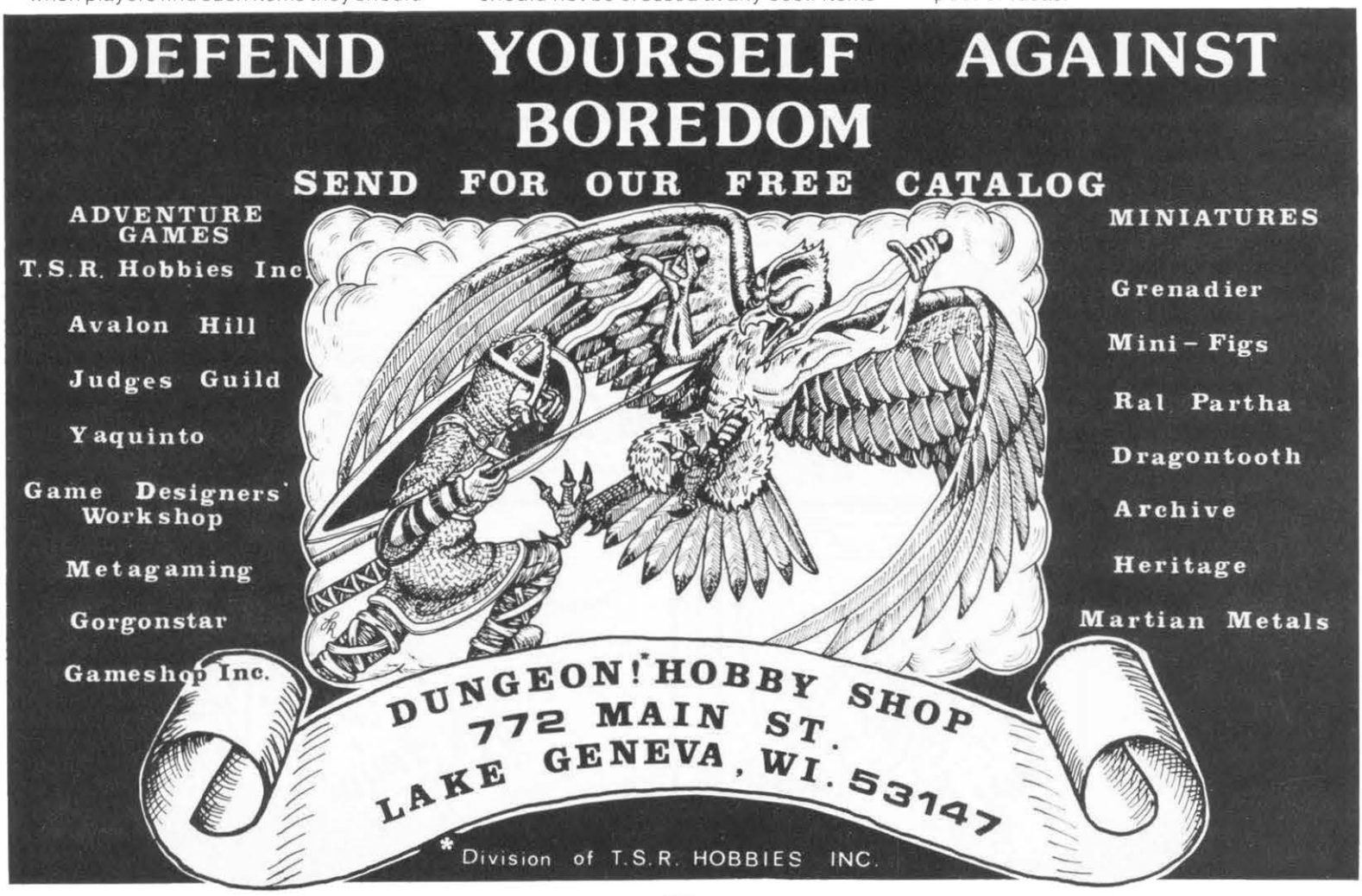
Probably the most frequently asked question on Gamma World that comes across my desk is "What should I give player characters, and where should

they start out?" This question takes a lot of answering, in that it works on several different levels. Referees can opt to create areas that still have a great deal of technology of one type or another. In these areas, the players would have a general supply of the items common to the area. They would have items like a pistol of some sort, metal utensils, several sets of manufactured clothes, and one or two items of the "Ancients" (flashlights, armor, and the like). In such societies, currency *must* exist; a random supply of "domars" should be given to each starting player. If the culture has managed to raise itself to the level of the middle ages, then the players should receive a different set of materials to start off with. They would have items like metal daggers, leather armor, some type of riding beast, sacks (or maybe one well-made back pack), dried food along the lines of beef jerky and dried fruits, a single set of hand-made clothes, and maybe a few small bars of the local currency (probably gold).

This type of culture would place many restraints on the Gamma World player. "Ancient" technology would be rare, and those with knowledge in such things would be highly respected and have seats of power in any given culture. These types of people would always be seeking to retain their power, and thus when players find such items they should be forced to give them up or trade them away. The society would generate a slave class, either from the weaker humans and mutants or from the humans in a mutant dominated society.

Another culture to consider would be the Indian type (which is the one that I most frequently employ). In this type of culture, players start out with all of the items that an imagined village would have. Items would have to include weapons (bows and arrows, flint daggers, unusual clubs or throwing sticks, and the like), hide clothes, cured hide armor, brief boots, several forms of backpacks and sacks, some type of fire starter, dried food, herbs (with several different powers: possible anti-poison, stimulation, sleeping powders, etc.) and the like. The culture that I have developed for my game uses barter, and the only ones with technology are the shaamans of the villages and some of the player characters. The secret societies exist all over the continent, but have not been dealt with by any players. I have set up some basic taboos that serve to limit the powers of the players in the beginning, and they are strictly enforced. Players are taught from the start that swords are evil items that are not to be used. Those that use swords are obviously evil beings and should be destroyed. The roads of the "Ancients" are powerful things, and should not be crossed at any cost. Items of technology are holy, and should only be dealt with by tribal shaamans. The players all dislike these taboos, but they are enforced until their experience repeatedly tells them that the taboos are silly. The players that have progressed past these taboo concepts are all the better characters of the campaign.

What's in store for the future and Gamma World? There are a number of completed projects and ones on the drawing board. By the time that this article sees print, Gary Gygax's GW module "Legion of Gold" will be out and available. I have completed a beginner's module which is being polished by Harold Johnson (*of TSR's Product Development department*). I have several other modules under construction at the present time, but the big project is the rewrite of Metamorphosis Alpha. This booklet will be turned into a GW supplement with new creatures, mutational powers, technological items, and more information on Gamma World and all of its role playing aspects. If there is enough interest generated, I could use this publication for releasing bits of the work in progress (with the kind permission of the editor). (*Any time, Jim! — Ed.*) In any event, the RPGA members play all of TSR's role playing games, and I trust that others will write about Gamma World games in future issues so that all can partake of the pool of ideas.



ROCKSNOZ

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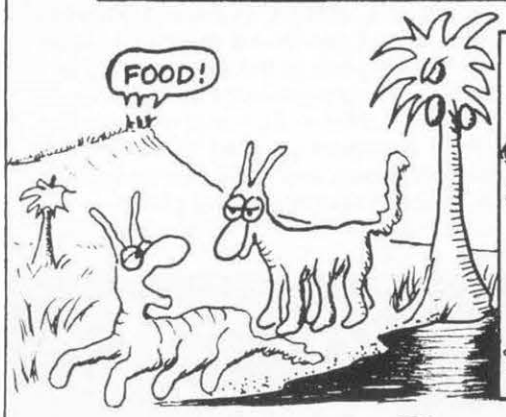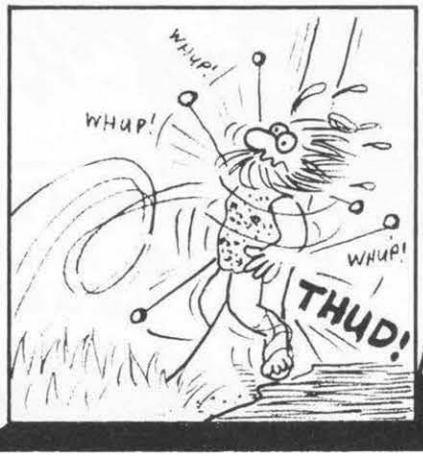
OUR INTREPID TRIO HAVE WANDERED FOR DAYS... WITHOUT FOOD!